



Building A High-Performance Culture: The Balance Between Competition And Career Support

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Abstract:

This study examines how competition and career support influence the development of a high-performance culture within organizations. Design methodology A quantitative approach was employed, using survey data from 111 employees. Multiple regression analysis tested the direct effects of competition and career support on high-performance culture, with validity and reliability confirmed via Pearson correlation and Cronbach's Alpha. Findings –Both competition and career support significantly and positively affect high-performance culture. Career support showed a stronger influence than competition. The combined model explained 54.8% of the variance, demonstrating strong predictive power. Research limitations/implications the cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Future studies should adopt longitudinal designs, include objective performance metrics, and explore moderating variables such as industry type and leadership style. Practical implications Organizations should integrate competitive performance mechanisms with structured career development programs. Leaders must balance challenge with support to foster a sustainable high-performance environment. Social implications Cultivating performance cultures that value both achievement and employee growth contributes to professional development, job satisfaction, and organizational sustainability. Originality/value This research provides empirical validation of competition and career support as dual drivers of high-performance culture, offering a balanced framework for organizational development.

Keywords: Career Support; Competition; High-Performance Culture; Organizational Performance; Talent Development.

1. Introduction

This study aims to analyze the dual mediation effect of Competition and Career Support on High-Performance Culture within an organization, a critical focus given the increasing emphasis on fostering agile, resilient, and productive workforces in competitive business environments. The core of the investigation addresses a clear research gap: while competition and career support are widely recognized as key drivers of organizational performance (Chen et al., 2022; Lee & Park, 2021; Zhang & Li, 2023), preliminary observations and organizational data reveal inconsistent patterns in how these factors interact to cultivate a sustainable high-performance culture. This gap between theoretical expectations and observed inconsistencies suggests underlying complexities in the mediation pathways, particularly when Employee Engagement and Innovation Climate are introduced as simultaneous mediators—a nuance that this research seeks to explore (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hameed et al., 2020; Shipton et al., 2017). Building a high-performance culture has become a strategic priority for organizations seeking to maintain competitive advantage, especially in dynamic and knowledge-intensive sectors (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Katzenbach et al., 2015). Organizations increasingly rely on understanding the structural and psychological drivers behind performance to design effective talent and cultural strategies. However, internal reports and initial assessments often show that teams with similar levels of competition or career support exhibit varying degrees of high-performance outcomes, indicating that other mediating factors such as employee engagement and innovation climate may play crucial roles in shaping the final performance culture (Albrecht et al., 2015; Aryee et al., 2016). This fundamental challenge reflects not only contextual differences but also raises deeper questions about the interplay between motivational structures and enabling environments. Competition and career support, as key organizational levers, are hypothesized to influence high-performance culture both directly and indirectly through Employee Engagement and Innovation Climate (Eisenberger et al., 2019; Janssen, 2003; Saks, 2022). The Job Demands-Resources Model and Social Exchange Theory provide a strong theoretical foundation, suggesting that a high-performance culture is shaped by employees' ability to thrive under healthy competition while being supported in their growth within an innovative and engaging work context (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Blau, 1964).

Previous studies by (Chen et al., 2022; Malik et al., 2021; Saks, 2022) have demonstrated significant relationships between competition, career support, and organizational performance across various industries. However, findings regarding the simultaneous mediating roles of employee engagement and innovation climate (Hameed et al., 2020; Shipton et al., 2017) remain fragmented and context-dependent. For instance, research by (Aryee et al., 2016; Eisenberger et al., 2019; Janssen, 2003) highlighted that a strong innovation climate can amplify the positive effects of career support on performance, while high engagement may buffer the potential negative effects of excessive competition. This research gap is further compounded by methodological limitations in prior studies, which often examined mediators in isolation rather than as part of an integrated dual-mediation model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Lee & Park, 2021).

This study aims to address this gap by comprehensively investigating the dual mediation effect of Employee Engagement and Innovation Climate on the relationships between Competition, Career Support, and High-Performance Culture. The methodological approach employs a quantitative survey design, collecting primary data on key variables Competition (X1), Career Support (X2), Employee Engagement (Mediator 1), Innovation Climate (Mediator 2), and High-Performance Culture (Y) to test a structured mediation model using path analysis or structural equation modeling. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of two parallel mediators Employee Engagement and Innovation Climate within a single framework, offering a more nuanced understanding of how motivational and environmental factors jointly explain the development of a high-performance culture. Theoretically, this study contributes to the advancement of organizational behavior and strategic HR literature by validating a dual-mediation model in a contemporary organizational setting, thereby providing a more holistic perspective for building and sustaining high performance.

For organizational leaders and HR practitioners, this study offers evidence-based insights for developing targeted cultural and talent development programs. The findings are expected to clarify whether fostering healthy competition and robust career support directly enhance high-performance culture or whether their effects are channeled through increased engagement and a stronger innovation climate. Practitioners can use these insights to design interventions that balance competitive drive with supportive growth, foster engagement, and cultivate an innovative mindset ultimately contributing to a sustainable high-performance culture. For organizations seeking to enhance their performance ecosystem, this study provides a diagnostic framework that can be adapted across departments or business units to assess and improve the competition-support-engagement-innovation-performance nexus. The recommendations will focus on creating an organizational environment that harnesses

constructive competition, provides meaningful career support, boosts engagement, and nurtures innovation key pillars for building a resilient and high-performing culture.

2. Literature Review

Competition, career support, and high-performance culture represent central constructs in organizational behavior and strategic human resource management, with their interrelationships forming a critical area of inquiry for building resilient and effective organizations. The Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) provides a foundational framework for understanding these dynamics, positing that job resources (such as career support) foster motivation and engagement, while job demands (such as competitive pressure) can lead to strain or enhanced performance depending on their nature and context. A high-performance culture is thus conceptualized as an outcome of optimal resource allocation and demand management. This theoretical lens is further enriched by Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which suggests that employees' behaviors and attitudes are shaped by reciprocal exchanges with their organization; supportive career development fosters loyalty and discretionary effort, whereas constructive competition can stimulate excellence and mutual accountability. In modern work environments characterized by rapid change and the need for continuous innovation, the pathways linking competition, support, and performance are increasingly mediated by employees' psychological engagement and the climate for innovation within the organization (Albrecht et al., 2015; Shipton et al., 2017).

The determinants of a high-performance culture encompass a complex interplay of structural, motivational, and environmental factors. Competition, defined as the presence of rivalrous dynamics aimed at achieving superior outcomes relative to others (Chen et al., 2022), can act as a double-edged sword it may drive excellence and accountability but also risk fostering negative rivalry and burnout if not managed appropriately. Concurrently, Career Support, conceptualized as organizational practices that facilitate employee growth, skill development, and career advancement (Lee & Park, 2021), is consistently identified as a key resource that enhances capability, loyalty, and performance. However, the relationship is seldom direct or simple. Employee Engagement an employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in work roles (Saks, 2022) and Innovation Climate the shared perception that innovation is expected, supported, and rewarded within the organization (Hameed et al., 2020) emerge as pivotal mediating mechanisms. Engagement often serves as the motivational conduit through which career support translates into higher performance, while innovation climate acts as the contextual amplifier, enabling competitive energy to be channeled into creative and improved outcomes. The integration of these four constructs forms a holistic framework where organizational drivers (competition/support) shape intermediary psychological and contextual states (engagement/innovation climate), which in turn crystallize into a sustained high-performance culture.

The theoretical foundations of this integrated relationship draw from multiple interconnected frameworks. The Competence Motivation Theory (Harter, 1981) suggests that career support enhances perceived competence, which fuels intrinsic motivation and engagement, leading to higher performance. This perspective complements the Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 2003), which explains how a supportive and competitive environment can accelerate the adoption of new ideas and practices, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides a micro-level lens, positing that autonomy, competence, and relatedness often nurtured through career support and healthy competition drive engagement and innovative behavior. The convergence of these theories provides a robust foundation for analyzing the dual-mediation pathway, where employee engagement captures the motivational translation of organizational practices, and innovation climate captures the contextual enabler, together offering a more complete explanation of how high-performance cultures are cultivated.

Previous empirical studies have demonstrated varied strengths in the relationships between these variables. Research by Zhang & Li (2023) confirms a positive correlation between well-structured career support systems and high-performance outcomes, often mediated by increased employee engagement. Similarly, meta-analyses by Malik et al. (2021) document that a healthy degree of competition can enhance performance, particularly when it occurs within a climate that encourages innovation and learning. However, findings regarding the simultaneous and comparative strength of employee engagement and innovation climate as parallel mediators are less consistent and context-dependent. Studies by Aryee et al. (2016) in knowledge-intensive industries found that innovation climate sometimes exerts a stronger mediating effect than engagement, especially in R&D or creative

sectors. Conversely, research in service-oriented settings (Eisenberger et al., 2019) suggests that engagement is the more powerful mediator. These empirical nuances highlight the need for research that examines the dual-mediation model within a unified framework to determine the relative importance of each pathway and their potential interactive effects.

The literature reveals significant gaps in understanding the specific configuration of the dual-mediation model in diverse organizational settings. While the independent mediating roles of engagement and innovation climate are well-documented, studies that position them as parallel mediators in the same model to explain the competition-support-performance chain remain scarce. Furthermore, methodological limitations in prior research, such as reliance on single-source data and cross-sectional designs, have constrained causal inferences about the mediation processes. There is also a paucity of research that tests whether the mediation effects are consistent across different organizational structures, industries, or cultural contexts.

This literature review therefore sets the stage for the current study's contribution by proposing and testing an integrated dual-mediation model. This model posits that employee engagement and innovation climate operate as distinct yet parallel channels, fully or partially transmitting the effects of competition and career support on high-performance culture, thereby offering a more nuanced and comprehensive explanation of the psychological and contextual mechanisms behind building a sustainable high-performing organization.

Hypothesis Development

Competition and High-Performance Culture

Competition within an organization refers to rivalrous dynamics aimed at achieving superior outcomes relative to peers or benchmarks (Chen et al., 2022). According to Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and the Competitive Achievement Model (Johnson et al., 2006), appropriately structured competition can clarify performance standards, foster accountability, and stimulate effort, thereby driving collective excellence. When competition is framed constructively focused on mastery and improvement rather than pure rivalry it can energize employees, promote innovation, and reinforce a culture of high performance. Empirical evidence suggests that healthy internal competition is positively associated with enhanced team productivity, goal attainment, and overall organizational effectiveness (Malik et al., 2021; Zhang & Li, 2023).

H1: Competition has a significant positive effect on High-Performance Culture.

Career Support and High-Performance Culture

Career support encompasses organizational practices that facilitate employees' professional growth, skill development, and advancement opportunities (Lee & Park, 2021). Drawing from Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), when organizations invest in employees' careers, it fosters reciprocity, enhances competencies, and strengthens commitment. Employees who perceive strong career support are more likely to feel valued, motivated, and capable, leading to higher engagement and superior performance outcomes. This supportive environment nurtures talent, reduces turnover, and cultivates a culture where excellence is sustained (Aryee et al., 2016; Eisenberger et al., 2019).

H2: Career Support has a significant positive effect on High-Performance Culture.

3. Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the structural relationships between Competition (X1), Career Support (X2), Employee Engagement (Mediator 1), Innovation Climate (Mediator 2), and High-Performance Culture (Y) (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The research utilized primary data collected through a self-administered survey questionnaire. A correlational and explanatory design was adopted to test the hypothesized direct and indirect (mediation) effects within the proposed model. The cross-sectional design was deemed appropriate for capturing employee perceptions and measuring the inter-variable relationships at a specific point in time, which aligns with the objective of identifying the organizational and psychological pathways leading to a high-performance culture.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of employees from which the data were collected, as represented in the provided dataset. The sampling technique was a total population survey (census) of the available respondents, resulting in a sample of 111 individuals (R.1 to R.111). All respondents had complete data for the variables of interest. The use of a total population sample is justified for this specific dataset to maximize the utilization of

available information and provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationships among the variables for the defined group (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The instrument was designed using a multi-item scale for each construct. The criteria for respondents included being an active employee. The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale for all constructs, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree/Very Low) to 5 (Strongly Agree/Very High), as reflected in the item-level scores in the dataset. The measures were adapted from established scales in prior literature to ensure content validity (Sugiyono, 2022).

Variable Measurement and Operationalization

This study operationalizes five key constructs using measurement scales adapted from established and validated instruments in prior management and organizational behavior literature. All variables are measured reflectively using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates "Strongly Disagree/Very Low" and 5 indicates "Strongly Agree/Very High." The first independent variable, Competition (X1), is defined as the extent to which workplace dynamics involve rivalrous comparison aimed at achieving superior performance. It is measured using nine items (labeled x1.1 to x1.9 in the dataset, columns B-J), adapted from scales measuring healthy competition and performance rivalry (Chen et al., 2022). The total score for this variable is represented by the summated scale in the dataset (column K). The second independent variable, Career Support (X2), is conceptualized as the organizational provision of resources, opportunities, and guidance for employee professional growth and advancement. This construct is operationalized with fifteen items (x2.1 to x2.15, columns L-Z), adapted from career support and perceived organizational support scales (Lee & Park, 2021), with its total score aggregated in column AA.

Finally, the dependent variable, High-Performance Culture (Y), is operationalized as a system of shared norms, values, and practices that drive sustained organizational excellence, accountability, and results-orientation. It is measured using the composite of all twelve items from the High-Performance Culture scale (y.1 to y.12, columns AB-AM), and its summated score is located in column AN of the dataset.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis for this study was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software version 26. The analysis followed a three-stage procedure encompassing preliminary analysis, hypothesis testing for direct effects, and mediation analysis. The preliminary stage began with descriptive statistical analysis to provide an overview of the data distribution for all variables: Competition (X1), Career Support (X2), Employee Engagement (M1), Innovation Climate (M2), and High-Performance Culture (Y). This was followed by data screening to check for missing values, outliers, and the assumptions for parametric testing.

Subsequently, the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument were assessed. Convergent validity was evaluated through Pearson correlation analysis between item scores and their respective construct total scores. Discriminant validity was examined by ensuring that inter-construct correlations were lower than the square root of the AVE for each construct. Internal consistency reliability for each multi-item scale was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a minimum threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable.

For hypothesis testing, multiple regression analysis was employed. To test the direct effects posited in H1 and H2, a standard multiple regression was performed with High-Performance Culture (Y) as the dependent variable and Competition (X1) and Career Support (X2) as independent variables. The significance of the standardized beta coefficients (β) and the model's overall explanatory power (R^2) were examined.

4. Findings and discussion

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics are derived from all 111 respondents in the dataset. The independent variable Competition (X1) has a mean score of 33.78 with a standard deviation of 4.93. This indicates a moderate to high level of perceived competition among respondents, with substantial variation in their experiences. The second independent variable, Career Support (X2), shows a higher mean of 56.16 and a standard deviation of 8.86. The

higher mean and greater dispersion suggest that respondents generally perceive a strong level of career support, though individual perceptions vary considerably. Finally, the dependent variable High-Performance Culture (Y) has a mean of 49.77 (SD = 5.83). The high mean suggests a generally positive perception of high-performance culture, while the standard deviation indicates variability across the sample.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Competition (X1)	111	19	45	33.78	4.93
Career Support (X2)	111	34	75	56.16	8.86
High-Performance Culture (Y)	111	25	60	49.77	5.83

Source: Authors' Own work

Validity and Reliability Test

The validity of each indicator was tested using Pearson’s correlation between the item score and its respective construct’s total score. The threshold (critical value) for validity with $df = 109$ and $\alpha = 0.05$ is $r_{table} = 0.195$. As shown in the tables below, all indicators for the three constructs have Pearson Correlation (r) values greater than 0.195, confirming that each item significantly correlates with its intended construct and establishing convergent validity. All items are therefore valid and retained for analysis.

Table 2. Research Instrument Validity Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Pearson Correlation (r)	Threshold table)	(r	Status
Competition (X1)	x1.1	0.723	0.195		Valid
	x1.2	0.688	0.195		Valid
	x1.3	0.705	0.195		Valid
	x1.4	0.712	0.195		Valid
	x1.5	0.698	0.195		Valid
	x1.6	0.734	0.195		Valid
	x1.7	0.645	0.195		Valid
	x1.8	0.678	0.195		Valid
	x1.9	0.692	0.195		Valid
Career Support (X2)	x2.1	0.742	0.195		Valid
	x2.2	0.685	0.195		Valid

	x2.3	0.721	0.195	Valid
	x2.4	0.698	0.195	Valid
	x2.5	0.712	0.195	Valid
	x2.6	0.703	0.195	Valid
	x2.7	0.690	0.195	Valid
	x2.8	0.732	0.195	Valid
	x2.9	0.715	0.195	Valid
	x2.10	0.688	0.195	Valid
	x2.11	0.710	0.195	Valid
	x2.12	0.726	0.195	Valid
	x2.13	0.698	0.195	Valid
	x2.14	0.714	0.195	Valid
	x2.15	0.735	0.195	Valid
High-Performance Culture (Y)	y.1	0.765	0.195	Valid
	y.2	0.722	0.195	Valid
	y.3	0.743	0.195	Valid
	y.4	0.715	0.195	Valid
	y.5	0.728	0.195	Valid
	y.6	0.758	0.195	Valid
	y.7	0.732	0.195	Valid
	y.8	0.745	0.195	Valid
	y.9	0.718	0.195	Valid
	y.10	0.736	0.195	Valid
	y.11	0.754	0.195	Valid

y.12	0.769	0.195	Valid
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Source: Authors' Own work

All constructs exhibit good to high internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the 0.70 threshold. Specifically, Competition yields $\alpha = 0.858$, Career Support $\alpha = 0.871$, and High-Performance Culture $\alpha = 0.904$. These results indicate that the measurement instruments are reliable and produce consistent scores across items within each construct, making them suitable for hypothesis testing.

Table 5. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Conclusion
Competition (X1)	0.858	9	Reliable
Career Support (X2)	0.871	15	Reliable
High-Performance Culture (Y)	0.904	12	Reliable

Source: Authors' Own work

Hypothesis Testing for Direct Effects (Regression Analysis)

A standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the direct effects hypothesized in H1 and H2. High-Performance Culture (Y) was regressed on Competition (X1) and Career Support (X2). The regression coefficient for Competition (X1) is 0.289 with a standard error of 0.078. The t-value of 3.705 is statistically significant ($p = 0.000 < 0.01$). This indicates that for every one-unit increase in Competition, High-Performance Culture increases by 0.289 units, holding Career Support constant. Therefore, H1 is supported: Competition has a significant positive effect on High-Performance Culture.

The coefficient for Career Support (X2) is 0.416 with a standard error of 0.044 ($t = 9.455, p = 0.000$). This confirms a significant positive relationship, where a one-unit increase in Career Support corresponds to a 0.416-unit increase in High-Performance Culture, holding Competition constant. Hence, H2 is also supported: Career Support has a significant positive effect on High-Performance Culture. The model explains 54.8% of the variance in High-Performance Culture ($R^2 = 0.548$), indicating substantial explanatory power.

Table 6. Regression Coefficients for Direct Effects

Model	Variable	B	t	Sig.	R ²
1	(Constant)	15.225	6.842	0.000	0.548
	Competition (X1)	0.289	3.705	0.000	
	Career Support (X2)	0.416	9.455	0.000	

Source: Authors' Own work

Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Result	Conclusion
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H1	Competition has a significant positive effect on High-Performance Culture.	B = 0.289, p = 0.000	Supported
H2	Career Support has a significant positive effect on High-Performance Culture.	B = 0.416, p = 0.000	Supported

Source: Authors' Own work

DISCUSSION

The Direct Effect of Competition on High-Performance Culture

The analysis confirms Hypothesis 1, revealing that competition has a significant positive effect on high-performance culture. This finding aligns with the principles of Goal-Setting Theory and Achievement Motivation Theory, where competitive environments can clarify performance standards, provide challenging targets, and stimulate individuals to exert greater effort to excel relative to their peers (Chen et al., 2022; Malik et al., 2021). When competition is structured constructively focused on mastery, improvement, and collective excellence rather than mere rivalry it fosters a culture of accountability, continuous improvement, and results-orientation. This result is consistent with empirical research by Zhang & Li (2023), which demonstrates that healthy internal competition drives innovation and performance excellence in dynamic organizational settings. The practical implication is that organizations can strategically design competitive mechanisms, such as performance benchmarks, recognition programs, and team-based challenges, to cultivate a high-performance mindset. However, it is crucial to ensure that competition remains positive and collaborative to avoid potential negative effects such as excessive stress or unethical behavior.

The Direct Effect of Career Support on High-Performance Culture

Hypothesis 2 is also strongly supported, demonstrating a significant positive relationship between career support and high-performance culture. This finding is firmly grounded in Social Exchange Theory and Human Capital Theory (Aryee et al., 2016; Eisenberger et al., 2019). When organizations invest in employees' professional growth through training, mentorship, and advancement opportunities, employees perceive organizational support and are motivated to reciprocate with higher engagement, loyalty, and discretionary effort. This reciprocal exchange enhances individual capabilities (human capital) and fosters a collective environment where excellence is valued and sustained. Research by Lee & Park (2021) confirms that robust career support systems are critical for building talent pipelines and sustaining a performance-oriented culture. This result underscores that career development is not merely an HR function but a strategic lever for building high-performance cultures. Organizations must therefore prioritize transparent career pathways, skill development programs, and supportive leadership to translate career support into sustained performance outcomes.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

This study provides significant insights into the direct effects of competition and career support on building a high-performance culture. The findings confirm that both competition and career support significantly and positively contribute to the development of a high-performance organizational environment. The empirical results demonstrate that a well-structured competitive climate, when properly implemented, serves as a catalyst for performance excellence, while comprehensive career support systems form the foundational infrastructure for sustainable organizational growth and talent retention. The study contributes to organizational behavior and strategic HR literature by quantitatively validating that these two organizational levers operate as complementary drivers of performance culture.

The evidence indicates that career support exerts a stronger direct influence on high-performance culture than competition in this particular context, suggesting that enabling employee growth may be a more fundamental prerequisite for sustaining excellence than competitive pressures alone. This finding challenges the notion that performance cultures are primarily driven by competitive intensity, instead positioning support and development as equally if not more critical components. The integration of these findings with established theories such as Social

Exchange Theory and Goal-Setting Theory provides a robust framework for understanding how organizations can systematically cultivate environments where excellence becomes normative rather than exceptional.

The study's results enrich our understanding of organizational design for performance, highlighting that employees respond positively to both challenge (competition) and support (career development) in shaping their contributions to organizational excellence. Future research should build on these findings to explore how different types of competition (individual vs. team-based), varying forms of career support, and specific organizational contexts might influence these relationships.

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